

14 January 1968

Channel 13 - WTVT-TV, Tampa, Florida

1 - 1:30 P.M.

ANNOUNCER: For the next thirty minutes Kerry W. Thornley will discuss Lee Harvey Oswald and New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison as Channel 13 News presents "Insight", a Public Affairs program of Channel 13 News. Here is News Director Ray Dantzler.

DANTZLER: Good afternoon. Our guest on "Insight" today is the most recently publicized name on a rather long list in the possession of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison. Twenty-nine-year-old Kerry W. Thornley is a free-lance writer living in Tampa since last October and earlier last week was subpoenaed by Garrison reportedly in that district attorney's continuing investigation into the November 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Joining me on the "Insight" panel this afternoon are: Cy Smith of the WTVT Editorial Department and Gil Butler of the Channel 13 News Staff.

Mr. Thornley, on Tuesday of this week, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison said he had issued a subpoena for you saying, in effect, you failed to tell the whole truth when you testified before the Warren Commission which investigated the assassination of President Kennedy. Specifically, he said you told the Commission you never saw Lee Harvey Oswald after you served together in the Marine Corps. He then went on to charge you with having been "closely associated" - those are his words - with Oswald in a number of places in New Orleans in September of 1963.

Do you have any reason to believe that you may have given the Warren Commission bad information, either intentionally or inadvertently?

THORNLEY: No; I don't have any reason to believe that I gave the Warren Commission bad information. I, uh, I, uh, believe that I told them everything that I thought was relevant at the time. At that time I was, of course, convinced that Oswald had been the lone assassin as were, I think, most of us then.

The, uh, uh, business about, uh, being seen with Oswald in New Orleans, I think, uh, I think in the first place, I think Mr. Garrison is exaggerating the information he has at hand and I think the information he has comes from a woman named Barbara Reed (phonetic) who, shortly after the assassination, told me that she was certain that she saw me and Oswald sitting together in the Bourbon House in New Orleans which was a kind of a local gathering place and was one of my hangouts and, it later turned out, was a place that had been frequented by Oswald.

DANTZLER: But you were not sitting with Oswald there at the time?

THORNLEY: Uh, well, when she told me this, you know, she like, uh, she, she had been sitting nearby and I didn't know her back at this time and on this day when she had claimed she saw us sitting together. But she had said something to me, I

was talking to this person, whoever I did happen to be sitting with at the time, and, uh, she, uh, she said to me, uh, something about my voice, she said, it was a compliment, I don't remember exactly what, but she interrupted the conversation to say this, you know, I felt kind of embarrassed and I said, "Well, thank you", you know. Then she went back to what she had to say to whoever she was talking to, she was sitting up at the bar and I was sitting at this table in the corner, and I went back to talking to whoever I was talking to.

Now, after the assassination - this was several weeks before the assassination, I don't remember when - after the assassination, she said that that day, when she had made that remark to me, that the person I had been sitting ~~with~~ next to was Oswald and I said, "Are you sure?" And she said, uh, she said, "Yes", so I said, "Well, are you sure it wasn't - -", and I started naming people, you know. "Are you sure it wasn't Dave Carpenter, are you sure it wasn't this person?" and I just went down this list and, uh, she knew all these people, or claimed to, you know. She was sure it wasn't any of these people.

So, uh, I became, ih, you know, I thought gee whiz, did he walk into the place? And we concocted a theory right there when Barbara and I were talking. She wasn't being hostile toward me when she said this. And we concocted the theory that maybe I had been sitting there and maybe Oswald had come walking into the door and maybe I had looked at him, not recognized him as Oswald from the Marine Corps, but seen his face ~~xxxfamiliax~~, you know, familiar. A lot of people in the French Quarter, didn't want to insult him by pretending not to know who he was. Same thing from him, you know. Us sitting down, uh, small talk for a while, uh, and him - - She said that she remembered him saying something about just having taken his wife back to Dallas, and so forth.

This, mind you, was, uh, uh, all, uh, said to me by Barbara after, uh, the word was out, uh, you know, well out, ~~my~~ that Oswald had been to Dallas and had been in New Orleans and had known me in the Marine Corps. So I began to think, you know, "Wow, maybe I've got a case of amnesia here, or something", because I couldn't remember for certain who it was that I was talking to. You know, it was weeks ago and I know a lot of people.

So the next day I brought this up to some of Barbara's friends and they said, Oh, don't worry about it. They said she always does this, you know. Every thing that happens of any importance, she imagines that somehow she's either right in the middle of it or right on the edge of it. And the more I asked around, the more this was confirmed so I just dismissed it.

DANTZLER: Are you convinced in your mind then that you knew Oswald well enough when you were in the Marine Corps with him that you would have recognized him if it had been him?

THORNLEY: I think I would have recognized him, ~~just~~ you know. There's always the off chance that, out of the context of the Marine Corps situation and having no idea that he was in New Orleans, I would not have recognized him. But it's such a remote possibility that I don't really consider it, you know.

SMITH: Taking this thing about your knowing Oswald in the Marine Corps, he impressed you ~~enough~~ apparently enough for you to write a novel based on a character which was based on Oswald. Is this true?

THORNLEY: Yes. Well, he impressed me for a number of reasons. For one thing, we kind of got thrown together in the beginning because I was an atheist at that time and so was he. And there were a lot of very fundamentalists types of guys in this outfit who had the missionary spirit and we'd kind of get cornered and we'd be, you know, defending our views against theirs. And the thing was, where we disagreed, where Oswald was a Communist and that time I was, I'd say a sort of an extreme liberal but I had very definite reservations about Communism. And so, when he and I would get into arguments with each other would be usually on the subject of Communism. And at this time he impressed me because he was articulate, he was able to defend his views and he was intelligent and he also had a sense of humor and he said some funny things now and then. And he had a very rebellious attitude. And that, as far as I was concerned, and as far as most of us were concerned was fine because we lived in an outfit where the esprit was definitely on the side of the enlisted man, you know, and sort of against the power structure in the outfit. And so that all impressed me to some degree, but not enough to write a book based on him.

What caused me to make that decision is when I read in the Stars and Stripes about, oh, the second or third page, little article, that a man named Lee Harvey Oswald, who was a former Marine, just walked into the American Embassy in Moscow and plopped down his passport. You know, my first reaction was, "He really meant it." You know, I thought he was a parlor Communist, you know, I thought it was just a bunch of theoretical interest on his part and this surprised me.

And I was also now, at the time I read this article in the Stars and Stripes about Oswald's defection, I was in the outfit that Oswald had been in when he was overseas. I was in MACS 1. I had met Oswald after he had come back from overseas and before I had left for overseas.

SMITH: How long a period was this?

THORNLEY: It was ~~experienced~~ for a three-month period and he mustered out of the service shortly after I left for overseas, I understand. And when I got over there, I began to see what he had against the United States and, particularly, the military. Because I saw Marines beating up taxicab drivers, I saw them, you know, pushing

people around because they could get away with it over there. In Japan, to some degree, and ~~in~~ particularly in Formosa, and the Phillipines. And Oswald called this "U. S. Imperialism" and I still think that was a sort of an exaggerated view of it but it was a very important thing. It was turning - I think that sort of thing, trained killers on liberty in peaceful Allied foreign nations, does a lot to stimulate anti-American attitudes.

BUTLER(?): The impression I get of Oswald from reading the things we read about him was that he was somewhat of an unstable character and a flighty thinker, that maybe he didn't believe in something so much as he was just unhappy about things - -

THORNLEY: Yes.

BUTLER: And I also got the impression that some of that unhappiness was more of a matter of personality rather than pure intellectual decisions that he had made. Would you call him that kind of a person - -

THORNLEY: Yes.

BUTLER: - - - that would be unhappy maybe wherever he was?

THORNLEY: I think so, yeah. He, I don't know if he'd be unhappy wherever he was, he seemed to have a certain built-in thing in his psychology where he always managed to come up with a grievance. The last time he and I spoke was one day when we were out sitting, one Saturday morning, we were out sitting around waiting for a parade to start. And it was just, you know, it was a stupid thing. It was one of these things the military has where some guys were retiring from the Marine Corps, so they ~~pk~~ wake up a bunch of grumpy enlisted men and cancel their liberty for that day and take them out and parade them back and forth in front of them.

And Oswald was making comments on the stupidity of it. And I had just read "1984" at his recommendation and the words "comrade" and "revolution" was used very much in "1984", you know, as well as by Communists. And I said, thinking about the book, you know, I said, "Well, you know, comes the revolution, Comrade, you can change all that." And he looked at me and he said, "Not you, too, Thornley!" and got up and walked off.

DANTZLER: What did you take that to mean?

THORNLEY: Well, I took it to mean than I was joining the others in the outfit in attacking him for being a Communist, which wasn't what I had meant, but I decided, well, you know, his whole, the fact that he had jumped to a conclusion that quickly just, I decided there was no point in trying to rectify it, you know, and so I just forgot about it and that's the last time we ever spoke to each other.

QUESTION: Do you feel now that Oswald was the lone assassin - or was the assassin at all?

THORNLEY: No; I don't. The reason I don't is because some time ago now scanned

through the 26 volumes of supportive evidence, supposedly, for the conclusions of the Warren Commission. And I, the first thing I saw in there that really - now, I had read the Warren Commission Report very carefully in writing "Oswald" because I was not only writing about, the publisher not only wanted me to say what I knew about him, he wanted me to imagine what was going through his mind as he committed the assassination and all this sort of thing. So I really had to research what the Warren Commission Report had said because that was all the available data at the time.

QUESTION:this book, "Oswald", is based on the assassination actually.

THORNLEY: Right. And so I was very familiar with the Warren Report and there was one section there where this man named Deputy Sheriff Craig had told someone that he had seen Oswald running from the Book Depository and getting into a car that later turned out to resemble Ruth Paine's car very much, just after the assassination. And they said, well, this couldn't be because Deputy Sheriff Craig is an unreliable witness. And they paraphrased this by proving something that was supposed to have happened earlier where Craig was supposed to have said he walked into an office and identified Oswald after custody had been taken of him and Oswald had stood up very dramatically and looked at him and said, "Now everyone will know who I am." You know, this seemed so ridiculous that you thought, well, what's wrong with that Craig? You know, is he some kind of a nut?

But if you read Craig's testimony in the 26 volumes, that's not at all what happened. Oswald leaned forward and looked at the police captain who was questioning him and said, "Now everybody will know who I am," objecting to them dragging Craig in to identify him. He didn't even, apparently, at this time know he was being accused of the assassination and he was objecting to this invasion of his privacy apparently.

QUESTION: Do you feel that he would be capable of it, just from your knowledge of Oswald from your association with him?

THORNLEY: Basically, that's what I was saying in my book, "Oswald", was that I felt he would be capable of it and I was explaining why, you know, what I thought would motivate him if he was, you know, if he did it.

QUESTION: What was your initial reaction when you first heard about the assassination?

THORNLEY: My initial reaction was, "Well, Oswald's got himself into something again." He was always getting himself into things where he really wasn't to blame, you know, but he would attract suspicion, you know, he would go out of his way to get himself accused of something and afterwards he would lord it around about, you know, how persecuted he was. And I thought, well, he'd done it again, you know, why doesn't the character use good sense? And as things kept going on, I began to wonder.

But for quite a while I was pretty sure he was innocent and then they killed him and then - or, Ruby killed him - and then I experienced a real feeling of shock when that happened because I had never seen anyone that I had known and talked to and so forth on the front page of the paper getting shot in the gut, you know. And then the evidence kept piling up, according to the papers, against Oswald I automatically assumed, well, he must have been guilty. Then I began to think, well, if he was guilty, you know, what was going through his head, you know - tried to do some amateur head-shrinking.

QUESTION: How long were you in New Orleans?

THORNLEY: I was in New Orleans for approximately three years.

QUESTION: Let me bounce off some names here which have come up in Garrison's investigation and just ask you for a yes or no if you know them personally.

THORNLEY: O. K.

<u>QUESTION:</u> How about David Ferrie?	No
How about Perry Raymond Russo from Baton Rouge?	No
Clay Shaw?	No
Vernon Bundy?	No
How about Alvin Beauboeuf?	No
Miguel Torres?	No
Fred Leemans (phonetic)?	No
John Kankler (phonetic)?	No
Did you know Ruby personally?	No
Eugene Davis, a bar-owner in New Orleans?	Eugene Davis - No
How about Walter Sheridan?	No
William Gerlick (phonetic)? Were you ever questioned by Gerlick when he was Garrison's former chief investigator?	No, I don't recall any of those names.
How about J. Garrett Underhill?	No
And George de Mohrenschildt?	

THORNLEY: De Mohrenschildt I heard through the, through Jenner. Jenner mentioned de Mohrenschildt. Jenner was the counsel of the Warren Commission who questioned me. Afterwards we went over to the Supreme Court cafeteria and had lunch and on the way back he was telling me about who he would enjoy talking to and so forth and de Mohrenschildt was one of the people that he mentioned then.

QUESTION: But you did not know him yourself?

THORNLEY: Oh, no. No. He was, I believe, someone in the Dallas Russian community.

QUESTION: Yes. He was a White Russian refugee in Dallas. We've got a couple more

of these names, and then we'll move on. How about Hugh Borden (?) and Guy Bannister, both of whom are supposed to run a private detective agency in New Orleans?

THORNLEY: Guy Bannister rings a bell; I don't know why, but it does. I don't remember reading it in connection with the Garrison assassination, uh, the Garrison investigation.

QUESTION: Well, I think Guy Bannister also was the pilot of a plane in which DeLesseps Morrison crashed at the time.

Gordon Novel, who supposedly worked pretty close with Ferrie. Did you ever know him?

THORNLEY: No; I didn't. Some of these names I heard after they came out in connection with Garrison's investigation, but never before then.

QUESTION: One more here. PFC Eugene Dinkin - D-i-n-k-i-n - does that ring a bell with you anywhere?

THORNLEY: Nope.

QUESTION: Supposedly there is a report on him, according to Mr. Garrison, which the CIA has locked in its archives and he was questioning why, and I was just wondering if ~~you~~^{he} happened to have been ~~in the~~^a Marine Corps associate of yours or Oswald's.

THORNLEY: Not that I know of.

QUESTION: Did you know of any people - you say you didn't, just by accident, apparently, run into Oswald while you were there most recently - did you have several common friends that you know of?

THORNLEY: Well, like, it has turned out since then that I know people who know people whose relatives know Clay Shaw, you know. And I know people, uh, I know a girl, I believe, who went with Russo at one time. But also, I know about five or six people who know Garrison. You know. New Orleans, particularly the French Quarter, is not that big a town and that kind of thing happens. But I never knew any of these people and never even knew that I knew People who knew them before it came out in the papers.

QUESTION: Did you ever hear talk among these people that later you might have connected with the assassination, any talk about, "We're gonna kill the President", or anything like that?

THORNLEY: No, no. Not that I can think of offhand.

QUESTION: Well, you indicated yourself ~~that you~~, I believe, that you didn't particularly care for President Kennedy.

THORNLEY: No; I didn't, I was no admirer of President Kennedy and when the assassination happened I saw no reason to cry crocodile tears over it because I felt that that was hypocritical. And I saw a lot of people who had been running down

Kennedy the day before who were pretending to be very upset about it. That irritated me. I think I made a - I know I made a lot of people very angry the night of Kennedy's assassination because I just, you know, I refused to be depressed about it, unhappy about it. This sort of thing, later I came to feel, I guess I felt there was a kind of poetic justice in it because a few days later when Oswald was assassinated, people were acting toward me just as I had acted toward them when Kennedy was assassinated, walking around kind of, you know, smiling and taking it kind of lightly and making jokes about it. Then I could see, from the other side, just how sort of ghoulish this was, you know, this kind of, to just dismiss the death of another man lightly.

But aside from that, I don't ~~remember~~ ever recall talking to anybody who said they thought Kennedy ought to be assassinated and I don't, I didn't have any friends in New Orleans, particularly, who shared my own views which, I've been called a right-winger and I've been called an extreme leftist and I've been called an anarchist, and on occasion I've called myself all these three things in order to explain my views in one area or another.

To be perfectly accurate, I would call myself a libertarian in that I believe in the total sovereignty of the individual; it's an extreme form of individualism. I believe that every man has a complete right to his own body and to anything he creates and the products of his work. So this makes me opposed to the draft on one hand and opposed to welfare programs on the other, back and forth all - - -

QUESTION: Mr. Thornley, in his investigation, on a number of occasions, Mr. Garrison has referred to "the powerful forces in Washington" as obstructing his investigation, as hiding and keeping information from him, etcetera. Since you were named by him on Tuesday as someone he would like to talk to again, have you had any contact with these "powerful forces" in Washington, anybody suggesting you not go, you do go and tell him something?

THORNLEY: No; a reporter from Washington called me and told me a few things about Garrison that ~~confirmed what~~ just confirmed more or less what I believed. One of them was that this man felt that he was capable of, perfectly capable of manufacturing evidence which I don't know whether this is true or not but if it is, I am now prepared for it.

QUESTION: What about these past three years? Have you ever been approached by any one remotely associated with the CIA, the FBI, any Washington force that would - - -

THORNLEY: Not to my knowledge. Right after the assassination the Secret Service came to see me and they were there to see me like that, you know. It took them, well, they were there at midnight, I was waiting tables in 's at midnight Saturday night, I believe, they were there to see me. It was Mr. Rice and someone else and Mr. Rice, I have found out since then, is head Secret Service in New Orleans. And then a couple of days later the FBI came to see me, you know - - -

QUESTION: Do you think that they approached you so quickly, your book had not - - -

THORNLEY: They approached me so quickly because I had attracted suspicion to myself by the way I conducted myself immediately after the assassination, you know, by not being unhappy about it and so forth and also knowing Oswald, you know, the two things. I know exactly why they came to me so quickly because later I learned that a man named Tony Shimbosky (phonetic), an artist in Pirates Alley, had called them.

QUESTION: And told them that you knew, had known Oswald?

THORNLEY: And told them that I had known Oswald and that, according to rumor, I had a shotgun and had said that I was, I would have assassinated Kennedy, I was in position or in line to assassinate Kennedy if Oswald didn't. Well, fortunately the rumor was a shotgun because that's, you know, that's sort of a, an incredible assassination weapon. And I didn't have any guns and I didn't feel that I had anything to hide, you know, and so I talked to them and they were extremely polite. And their minds seemed to be made up that Oswald had, that moment, you know, that night already their minds seemed to be pretty much made up that Oswald had done it as a lone assassin.

At that time, I thought, well, that must be because they have a lot of evidence. Since then, I've, now that I think back on it and after seeing what, some of the things in the 26 volumes - another thing that concerns me is that Kennedy's head moves the wrong direction to be shot from behind in those pictures. His head flies back. And the large wound, the large opening is in the back of his head and you ask any Marine which way a bullet went in and which way a bullet went out and it's always the largest opening is the way it went out.

QUESTION: Well, then you agree with Mr. Garrison?

THORNLEY: I think, yeah, I agree with very much of what Mr. Garrison has said; however, this is not anything, as far as I can tell, that Mr. Garrison has turned up in his investigation. This is all the works of the critics of the assassination.

QUESTION: What do you think Garrison is up to?

THORNLEY: Well, I don't know, of course, you know. I think possibly he is simply a man with very poor judgement; I think possibly he's a dishonest man; I think possibly he's insane. And I think possibly it's all three. And I do think he's somewhat enamored with his own power and particularly with the power of subpoena, forcing individuals to appear and, many times apparently, on the basis of very little evidence.

I refused to cooperate with him earlier, in October, principally for that reason, because he had already, on the basis of something I had said to a friend or in an affidavit, called a man in to be questioned in New Orleans, a man named Hindell, who was in the Marine Corps in the same outfit with Oswald and I and who I remember as having spoken Russian to Oswald on a couple of occasions.

QUESTION: What was that name - Hindell?

THORNLEY: Hindell, John Rene Hindell. And, see, it turns out in his statement in

the 26 volumes, he says that he sometimes was called Hidell. Well, Hidell is the name under which Oswald supposed to have ordered the rifle. So, some of the critics of the Commission immediately got the theory on the basis of this that Hindell was a CIA agent, working with Oswald and had ordered the rifle and that Oswald had never known about it, you know, had been sharing the post office box with him under the name Hidell, you know, and had been using that name as a CIA agent. And that, and see, Hindell lives in New Orleans. Well, Garrison called him in.

And apparently, from what I've heard, from critics of the assassination, of the investigation of the assassination by the Warren Commission, that the man was called in on the basis of simply this speculation, against his will, and he brought a lawyer with him and he was very frightened - as who wouldn't be when they're living in New Orleans and Garrison's conducting this thing in this P. T. Barnum manner that he is and they get called in? - and he didn't have anything to say and he denied speaking Russian and so forth. Maybe he didn't; maybe he just knew a few terms; maybe they weren't talking Russian; maybe they were talking in pig-latin, you know.

I just thought that was insufficient reason to call the man in. Garrison should have gone to him, gone to his house, knocked on his door and say, "I have a few questions to ask you. May I come in?" instead of forcing him to appear.

QUESTION: Mr. Thornley, we are just about out of time. Let me ask you a couple more quickies, on a yes and no basis.

Have you ever been to Cuba? No

How about Russia? No

Any desire to go? No

Are you a member of the Minute Men Organization? No

How about the Anti-Communist League of the

Caribbean? No

Fair Play for Cuba Committee? No

Pro or con, Castro: what is your philosophy- - -

THORNLEY: I'm anti-Castro but I don't believe that the United States government should interfere with - I'm not a nationalist - - -

DANTZLER: I'm sorry, I'm going to have to - we're completely out of time.

Our guest on "Insight" today has been Kerry W. Thornley of Tampa, former Marine Corps associate of accused Presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald.

Speaking for the panel, I'm Ray Dantzler of Channel 13 News.

Good afternoon.

NOTE: At the beginning, it had been intended to identify each questioner but this proved impossible since sometimes the voices sounded too much alike.

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